NOVACON 42

Progress Report 1

Guest of Honour

Jaine Fenn

Park Inn Hotel Nottingham

9th – 11th November 2012

Guest of Honour

Jaine Fenn

Membership Rates

Adults: £40 13-16 years: £10 12 and under free

Rates apply until Easter 2012 and subject to review afterwards.

Day rates will be available.

Hotel Rooms

Double or Twin: £43 pppn Single: £ 61 pppn

Children: under 5 years free, 5-13 years £5 pppn (ages at the date of the convention)

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It's January 2012 and here we go with episode 42 of the great Novacon saga. So it must be time for ...

Progress Report 1

The main purpose of this PR is let you all know we are still here and busy planning to do the best Novacon since … well, since the last one. We would also like those of you who were members last year and haven't joined for this year's extravaganza to join up at once. We know who you are and, if you find a membership form with this PR, you'll know who you are. So get the form out, write that cheque, and send it to Steve Lawson.

I'm particularly pleased to welcome our Guest of Honour. Jaine Fenn is an up and coming author with four really good novels to her name and a new one out later this year. Make sure you get out there and read them – there might be questions later. You can find her introduction on page 5.

In addition, we mentioned in last year's PR1 that fanzines and the Nova Awards were going to be a continuing theme in the PRs, and they were. Unfortunately as you will see from Steve Green's piece in this issue, this had little effect, and there are still not enough of you out there voting. So we will continue with the crusade. We start in this PR with Doug Bell, half of last year's winning editorial team, who is explaining how and why he finds fanzines of importance.

And last, but not least, we will obviously be keeping you up-to-date with all the great ideas we have for the con… Bet you can hardly contain your enthusiasm! Oh, and Hotel Booking Forms will be sent out with PR2.

John Harvey

In this PR you will find

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to our contributors: Tony Berry, Jaine Fenn, Steve Green and Doug Bell.
Cover photograph and P5: James Cooke

Chairman's Welcome

Tony Berry

Hello and welcome to Novacon 42 PR1. This will be the last Novacon before the world ends in December 2012, so we'll try and make it a good one. (Personally, I have my doubts about the end-of-the-world thing but it will be amusing to see how many Americans actually believe it).

For those of you unfamiliar with it, Novacon is a single stream SF convention of around 200 members. We like to emphasise the Science bit and so aim to have a couple of real scientists giving talks over the weekend. 2012 is Alan Turing Year, celebrating the centenary since his birth, and we'll certainly be recognising this. Apart from the main programme, we have a dealers' room and artshow, auctions and a couple of other things to keep you entertained. The convention is designed to be a fairly relaxed social event, and we usually find an excuse for a party on Friday night.

Guest of Honour is Jaine Fenn, who is another of those annoying people who start off as a fan but then go on to become a successful writer and make the rest of us jealous. She has had short stories published since 2001, and her first novel *Principles Of Angels* came out in 2008. Since then she has published three more in the Hidden Empire series, which combine far-future technology with a touch of Fantasy. The last time Jaine came to a Novacon was Novacon 25, so it's been a while and we're happy to welcome her back, only this time as GoH!

The Novacon committee remains much the same as last year but with the addition of Yvonne Rowse helping out Dave Hicks with the all-important programme. After a number of years as Treasurer, Alice Lawson is stepping down to concentrate on running the world, er I mean the Worldcon bid for 2014, which I'm sure will win. Eve Harvey becomes Keeper of the Money. I've been told it's the 21st century and so Richard and Helena will be publicizing the convention on Facebook and Twitter (whatever they are) and don't forget the website. And now….

Meet Our Guest Of Honour

Jaine Fenn

I was something of a late developer. I grew up in a house with no books, a lack remedied with indiscriminate reading based around TV show novelisations and whatever looked interesting in the local branch of WH Smith. I accidentally discovered fantasy at age nine, and SF a few years later, but it wasn't until going to the-university-previously-known-as-Hatfield-Poly that I realised anyone else actually read this stuff. One consequence of this is that I'm still trying to catch up on reading a lot of the classics.

As well as meeting the man who later became my husband and getting involved in running the Poly SF society, I managed to get a degree in Humanities, with a major in Linguistics and a minor in Astronomy; my astronomy tutor was Dr Iain Nicholson who helped Brian Aldiss design the astronomy of Helliconia and was therefore adept at teaching cosmology to math-o-phobic arts students.

Having discovered fandom at Poly, I attended Eastercons as well as various other conventions (including a few Novacons) during the late 80s and through into the 90s, while working in IT. By the turn of the millennium I had gaffiated somewhat, largely as a result of a change of career to charity shop manager, a job which didn't leave many free weekends.

By then I was finally putting the effort in to achieve my long-held ambition to become an SF writer. My first professional sale was 'The Path to the Sun', an Aztec alternative history short which appeared in 'On Spec' in 2001. A number of other short story sales followed.

After a fortuitous meeting at the 2007 Eastercon, when I impressed my future editor with my hangover, I was contracted to write the Hidden Empire series for Gollancz. The first book, *Principles of Angels*, came out in 2008 to highly positive reviews. Three more books followed, with the fifth volume, *Queen of Nowhere*, coming out in the summer of 2012. Each novel is intended to work as a standalone whilst fitting into the overall Hidden Empire plot arc. I'm still trying to write fast enough to keep up with all the ideas.

My earliest influence was Ursula K le Guin, and this has shaped my desire to explore people's stories in conjunction with mind-bending concepts. However, my fiction is at the softer end of SF, as whilst I read and enjoy the hard stuff, I'm happy to leave the serious science to those for whom quadratic equations hold no fear, and to shamelessly mess with the laws of physics if the story demands it.

Novels

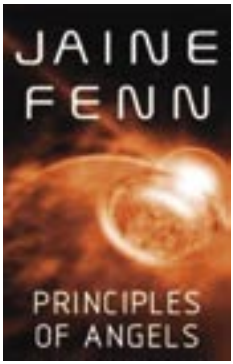
Principles of Angels (2008 Gollancz)

Consorts of Heaven (2009, Gollancz)

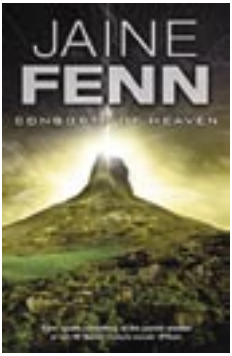
Guardians of Paradise (2010, Gollancz)

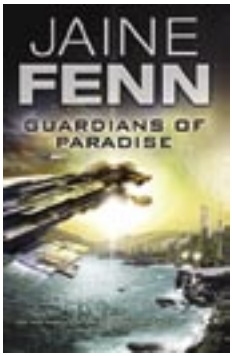
Bringer of Light (2011, Gollancz)

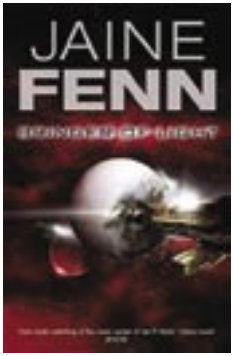
Queen of Nowhere (2012, Gollancz)



(Short story listing in PR2)







The Programme

Of course at this stage the programme is embryonic but we can assure you that there will be a Guest of Honour talk/interview, science talks from people who actually know their stuff, a Friday night chat show and a Sunday night meal and beer tasting.

We're planning various SF discussion panels – 'My favourite Golden Age Author', 'Novellas - where the great SF appears' and 'How SF reflects our real world'. Plus we'd like to know what your all-time favourite short stories are, so we'll be organising a poll.

"Just because you're paranoid..." science fiction isn't just the literature of the future, it's the literature of the future our Secret Masters have decided for us. Whether it's the illuminati, Goldman Sachs, the Fourth International or the BSFA, science fiction in general and being a fan in particular is all about the nagging suspicion that some fiendish conspiracy is being hatched just out of ear shot. Any panel permitted to discuss such conspiracies may, of course, only serve to obscure the truth. Nevertheless, we're going to try.

Speaking of conspiracies to destroy all that is humane and decent, once again we're hoping to resurrect the good old no holds barred alcohol-sodden undignified and not entirely derivative Novacon game show.

Art Show

Serena Culfeather has agreed to run this again after her excellent work over the last two years. Artists looking to exhibit work (for auction or otherwise) should contact her soon: serena@ravensquill.org

Dealer's Room

As in previous years, this will be in the large room next to the bar! £20 per 6ft table for the weekend and you have to be a member of the convention to book space. Interested dealers should contact Tony Berry: morbius@altair-4.co.uk

Parents' co-op

As usual Novacon will not be operating a crèche but we will be setting aside a room for smaller children to play under parental supervision if there is sufficient demand. If you're interested let us know as soon as possible.

Food and drink

Again as usual, and whenever Tony has any say in the matter, there will be real ale and a good cider provided in the bar, plus a range of snacks and meals throughout the weekend.

The Hotel

Tony Berry

New readers start here. The Park Inn Hotel in Nottingham is on the Mansfield Road, about a mile from the city centre. The main programme, dealers' room and bar are all on the ground floor. The artshow and small function rooms are downstairs, with lift access. There is another bar downstairs as well, but this will only be open Friday and Saturday evenings.

We're used to the hotel now, and they're used to us! The staff are friendly and helpful, but things can always be tweaked to improve life for the membership. Last year on the Friday evening the manager introduced a fixed-price carvery as well as the convention food and standard restaurant menu. This was to reduce the time people had to wait for food, and I understand it worked OK, so we'll probably do it again. The range of con food was also extended and I pretty much lived on the pizzas.

The Park Inn has an adjoining pool and leisure club which we can use as guests although they are run separately.

Important Stuff

There are 170 rooms, so there shouldn't be a problem fitting you all in, but if you want a single it is a good idea to book early. Room rates for B&B are £61 pppn for a single and £43 pppn for a double or twin. Children over 14 years pay adult rate.

The hotel has no family rooms as such, but does have a small number of interconnecting rooms (one double and one twin) which can be used for families. Contact us if you want one of these. You can also have a cot or fold-away bed put into your room for a child up to 14 years at no extra cost, but you will have to pay for the child's breakfast.

Although the hotel does not require a deposit, if you are going to arrive after 4pm on the day (most of you!) you will have to guarantee your room with a credit card (no charge will be taken) so that it is not sold to somebody else by the automated letting system. Please contact the hotel directly for this. Tel: 0115-935-9988.

2012 Nova Awards

Steve Green

As many of you will be aware, we significantly shook up the rules last year for the annual celebration of achievement in British and Irish fanzines. Rather than confining the franchise to Novacon members, we now accepted votes from any sf fan resident in either the UK or Eire who had a basic familiarity with the current fanzine scene.

Well, the best laid plans, et cetera: the result was a deafening silence, traffic from our new e-ballot resembling one of those wild west ghost towns with tumbleweed rolling down the street. Although there was a slight delay in getting the ballot form up and running, that doesn't entirely account for this innovation's failure to halt what has been a general slide in voting figures over the past decade.

It's never been easier to read the latest fanzines (most of those listed below are available online at eFanzines.com), nor simpler to cast your ballot (we're aiming for this year's form to go live at the Novacon website on 1 October, giving you an entire month to nail down your choices). If you have any interest in fanzines, then you are precisely the kind of person who should be getting involved with the Novas (and if you have any friends who share that enthusiasm, please pass on the word).

For the meantime, here are some of the fanzines eligible under the current rules: *All Jacq'd Up #1* (18pp), *#2* (18pp), *#3* (12pp, all quarto), Nic Farey (#1-#2 only), Steve Green & Jacqueline Monahan; *Ansible #291 – 294* (all 2pp, all A4), Dave Langford *Banana Wings #48* (56pp, A5), Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer; *Data Dump #167* (4pp, A5), Steve Sneyd; *Eat That Duck #3* (20pp, A4), Ron Gemmell; *The Fortnightly Fix #23* (6pp), *#24* (2pp), *#24.5* (1pp), *#25* (5pp), *#26* (2pp, all A4), Steve Green; *Inca #7* (52pp, A4), Rob Jackson; *iShoes #5* (12pp, A5), Yvonne Rowse; *Journey Planet #11* (80pp, A4), James Bacon & Chris Garcia; *Pips #8* (16pp, A4), Jim Mowatt; *Procrastinations #9* (32pp, A5), John Coxon; *A Meara for Observers #9*, *#10* (both 20pp, A4), Mike Meara.

If you know of others, please drop me a line via *stevegreen@livejournal.com*.

The 2011 Nova Awards for excellence in British and Irish fanzines were presented at Novacon 41 on Sunday, 13 November.

Best fanzine:

1 Head, edited by Doug Bell & Christina Lake;
2 A Meara For Observers, edited by Mike Meara;
3 Banana Wings, edited by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer.

Best fanzine writer:

1 Claire Brialey;
2 Yvonne Rowse;
3 James Bacon.

Best fanzine artist:

1 Dave Hicks;
2 Steve Green, Steve Jeffrey, Sue Mason, Alison Scott.

As you can see from the above Head! edited by Doug Bell and Christina Lake won the Best Fanzine award. To find out what motivates fans to spend time and money producing fanzines we asked Doug to enlighten us.

A Few Sheets of A4 and a Couple of Staples

Doug Bell

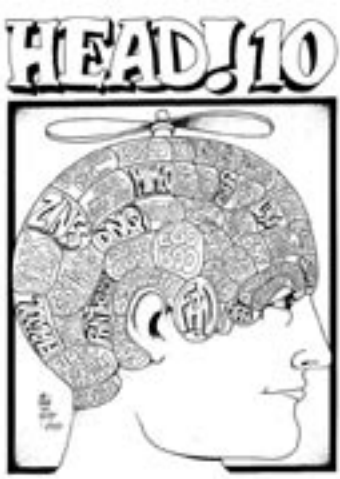
Although I came to SF fandom by a long-winded route through war-gaming, role-playing games and comic fandom, I discovered SF fanzines pretty quickly after walking through the front doors of my first convention. The year – 1992. The location – the Norbrek Castle Hotel, Blackpool. The convention – Illumination, that year's Eastercon.

Through hanging out with the some Glasgow fans, I ended up at a steamy, crowded room party on the first night of the con. A plastic cup of Strohl in my hand, I soon found myself chatting to an amiable beardy chap I later got to know as Steve Glover. Our slurred late night conversation was interrupted by this tall, Scottish guy leaning precariously into camera shot. Staring at Steve he offered him a copy of something that went by the name of *Bob?*

Turing to me, the looming figure grudgingly asked "I suppose you'll want one too, then?" And that was my introduction to fanzines and Ian Sorensen.

On the long trip back to Aberdeen I had plenty of time to read and absorb my

first SF fanzine. It was a fairly basic affair, some nice short comic bits of writing, a few sheets of A4 and a couple of staples. The issue also contained some interesting D. West artwork. I think, I vaguely understood the jokes although not yet all the fannish references. Enjoying the experience, and with many more hours to kill, I re-read *Bob?* again, several times. Somewhere around the third pass I thought I could do something like this, possibly.



As with all fannish stories this is all true, honest! apart from the fact that I was already familiar with the concept of fanzines having discovered role-playing zines through the classified adverts in the back of *White Dwarf.* Still those publications were nothing like *Bob?* or the other SF fanzines I was soon to discover. True, they were all obsessed with their own in-jokes, but unlike science fiction fanzines, few had that sense of community that was apparent within fandom. Few of the zines talked about each other, or laughed about themselves as our fanzines do.

Enjoying my initial contact with fandom, I threw myself into things big-time – attending as many conventions as I could, scrounged as many zines as people would part with, right up until my nemesis – the Bloody-1995-Bloody-British-Bloody-Worldcon. Like quite a few fans I spent too much time working that con and not enjoying it; the gophering shifts were too long and I found myself generally being treated like crap for helping out. And for a second time in this here article Steve Glover forces his way into the picture by dragging me off to the day-time fan room and giving me some fun stuff to do, like sort through the big pile of free fanzines, and fetching cups of tea for fan GOH Vince Clarke.

Despite Steve's intervention, I was so jaded after Worldcon that I decided to duck out of fandom for a couple of years. During this holiday away I took up other pursuits such as Munro Bagging (hiking up Scottish mountains over 3000 foot), going to football again and supporting the local Edinburgh ice-hockey team.

With these new hobbies came the delights of discovering more new fanzines – football zines were everywhere, hockey ones were scarce, and although

there was only one hillwalking zine out there (*The Angry Corrie*) it was a damn good one. These I enjoyed, but most of those I encountered were missing that secret missing ingredient that fannish ones had – again it was a deep sense of belonging to a community. It soon became evident to me that I was missing fandom and proper SF fanzines. So I returned to science fiction fandom in 1997, refreshed and clutching my own – *farky*, which was quickly followed by its successor *…and stuff!*

Although I'm now slightly embarrassed by those early efforts, they opened a whole new world to me. Strange sounding things like *Plokta*, *Balloons Over Bristol* and Victor Gonzalez regularly featured in my reading matter. Inspired I went to my first Novacon at the dreaded Britannia, New Street, where in those days it seemed everyone attending the convention pubbed their own ish. I started hanging out with cool people like Dave Hicks, Lennart Uhlin and er…Steve Green. I voted in the Novas and genuinely cared who deserved those fan awards each year. When I got together with Christina Lake it seemed only natural that we would do a collaborative zine, and so *Head!* was born.

This year's Eastercon will mark my twentieth year of attending conventions. During that time fanzines have been good to me – for a start there are the two shiny Nova Awards sitting on our mantle-piece. On top of that there is the fact that fanzines kept me connected with fandom, when as a neo I might have disappeared quickly off into some other diversion.

However the most important thing to me is they've given me the chance to meet friends from all around the world. Producing my own zine has allowed me to receive continually delightful and creative publications through the post, arm-wrestle Pat McMurray for Australia and GUFF, receive locs from Lloyd Penney, attend the secret Nova award winners room party each Novacon and stay on the *Banana Wings* circulation list despite never quite completing that long promised loc for Mark and Claire. Fanzines have allowed me to spend lots of time drinking beer with Randy Byers, and if that is not a good enough reason to start pubbing your ish then what is?

Novacon 42 Members

as at 13/01/2012

1	Jaine Fenn
2	Dave Weddell
28	½r
31	Michael Abbott
6	Brian Aldiss
87	Brian Ameringen
88	Meriol Ameringen
109	Margaret Austin
22	Simon Baldin
5	Iain M Banks
17	Barbara-Jane
41	Alan Bellingham
8	Tony Berry
9	Helena Bowles
72	Claire Brialey
105	Ian Brown
27	Pat Brown
26	Vernon Brown
61	Jonathan Cain
60	Marianne Cain
59	Steven Cain
62	David Carlile
10	Cat Coast
49	Dave Cox
100	Margaret Croad
106	Helen Cross
20	Julia Daly
90	Christine Davidson
89	Michael Davidson
30	Malcolm Davies
107	Steve Davies
43	Simon Dearn
108	Giulia DeCesare
111	Theresa Derwin
85	Paul Dormer
110	Martin Easterbrook
84	Janet Edwards
83	John Edwards
57	Sue Edwards
94	Flick
96	Gwen Funnell
78	Ron Gemmell
65	Niall Gordon
112	Steve Green
19	Dave Hardy
7	Harry Harrison
11	Eve Harvey
12	John Harvey
56	Julian Headlong
38	Martin Hoare
25	Dave Holmes
24	Bogna Hutchinson
23	Dave Hutchinson
104	Rob Jackson
36	Al Johnston
39	Sue Jones
47	Tim Kirk
37	Dave Lally

97	Dave Langford
13	Steve Lawson
33	Peter Mabey
34	Rory McLean
3	John Meaney
4	Yvonne Meaney
92	Michael Meara
91	Pat Meara
64	Chris Morgan
63	Pauline Morgan
86	Caroline Mullan
82	James Odell
51	Omega
68	Andrew Patton
52	Hal Payne
50	Harry Payne
53	Jodie Payne
71	Mali Perera
102	Catherine Pickersgill
101	Greg Pickersgill
73	Mark Plummer
40	Colette Reap
42	Roger Robinson
98	Tony Rogers
15	Yvonne Rowse
58	Alison Scott
16	Mike Scott
93	Harpal Singh
44	Martin Smart
45	Melica Smith
35	Robert Smith
54	Adrian Snowdon
29	Kate Solomon
55	Ian Sorensen
103	Douglas Spencer
14	Richard Standage
18	Tim Stannard
76	Chris Stocks
77	Neil Summerfield
81	Calvin Ternent
79	George Ternent
80	Linda Ternent
69	Markus Thierstein
99	David Thomas
75	Alison Tomkinson
74	Neil Tomkinson
48	Dave Tompkins
46	Jim Walker
95	Peter Wareham
70	Gerry Webb
21	Bridget Wilkinson
32	Anne Wilson
67	Alan Woodford
66	Anne Woodford

The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** was founded in 1971 to enable local and not so local fans to get together to discuss science fiction and related topics.

We meet on the second Friday of every month, 7:45pm at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, just 5 minutes walk from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. We usually start the evening with a guest speaker, often a professional in the field such as Brian Aldiss, Terry Pratchett or Peter Hamilton.

If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you! For further information, and a copy of our monthly newsletter, please:

Email: **bhamsfgroup@yayoo.co.uk**

Visit our website: **www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk**

OLYMPUS2012

GUESTS OF HONOUR

GEORGE RR MARTIN

PAUL CORNELL

TRICIA SULLIVAN

CORY DOCTOROW

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MARGARET AUSTIN & MARTIN EASTERBROOK

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